

**General Synod Council
Reformed Church in America
475 Riverside Drive
New York, New York 10115**

Minutes

- Place and Date** The fall meeting of the General Synod Council (GSC) of the Reformed Church in America was held at the Sheraton Gateway Suites, 6501 North Mannheim Road, Rosemont, Illinois, beginning on Friday, October 17, 2008 to Sunday, October 19, 2008. Moderator, John Ornee presided at the meeting.
- Worship** Worship on Friday and Saturday mornings was conducted in the joint plenary meetings of the GSC and the General Synod commissions.
- Members Present** The following members of the General Synod Council were present:
- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| Fred Algera | Elisabeth Kersten |
| Ned Beadel (<i>early departure</i>) | Aaron Klein |
| Mary Bechler | Marianne Lin |
| Carol Bechtel (<i>early departure</i>) | Toni Macon |
| Glen Blumer | Richard Morano |
| Randall Bohl | Lizbeth Moss |
| Mary Bryant | John Ornee |
| Michelle Chahine | Christopher Poest |
| John Busman | James Seawood |
| James Cobb | James Steward |
| Stephanie Doeschot | Arnold Van Ankum |
| Anna Gonzales | Ronald Vande Bunte |
| Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, <i>ex-officio</i> | Evan Vermeer |
| Rhonda Johnson | |
- Member Absent** The following member of the General Synod Council was unable to attend the meeting:
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|-----------------|-----------------|
| Thomas De Vries | David Patterson |
|-----------------|-----------------|
- Cluster Facilitators, Recorder, Communication Observers and Regional Synod Staff Observer** The following staff members were present for all or part of the meeting:
- | | |
|---|--|
| Barbara Boers, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Paul Karssen, <i>General Counsel</i> |
| Kenneth Bradsell, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Luis Perez, <i>Regional Synod Observer</i> |
| Jessica Bratt, <i>Executive Coordinator</i> | Mornier Rich, <i>Recorder</i> |
| Ken Eriks, <i>Cluster Facilitator</i> | Philip Tanis, <i>RCA Communications</i> |
| Earl James, <i>Coordinator, Multicultural Initiatives</i> | |
- OPENING**
- Call to Order** The moderator called to order the GSC meeting on Friday, October 17th at 10:45 am.

Consent Agenda

The GSC considered the following items in its consent agenda:

- To approve the scheduled and agenda as revised:
GSC agreed to address the corporate resolution after GP 2.6 - Election of First Vice Moderator.
- To approve the June 11, 2008, May 9, 2008 and March 25-27, 2008 General Synod Council minutes as distributed.
- To appoint the following persons as members of the Fresh Wind Task Force:
Mary Bechler (Elder) GSC/Heartland
Ivelisse Cruz (Deacon) Mid-Atlantics
Steve DeYoung (Deacon) Great Lakes
Cindy Heinen (Deacon) Mid-America
Bradley Lewis (Elder) Albany
Curt Patterson (Elder) Heartland
Bart Strong (Elder) Canada
Cora Taitt (Elder) New York
Don Werkhoven (Elder) Far West

Alternates:

John Chen (Elder) New York
Duane Schecter (Elder) Great Lakes
Peg Weaver (Elder) Great Lakes

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-26 VOTED: To approve the above items in the consent agenda by one consent vote.

Governance Process

GSC Bylaws Revision Process

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-27 VOTED: To adopt the GSC Bylaws as amended by the 2008 General Synod.

Election of First Vice Moderator

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-28 VOTED: To elect Ronald Vande Bunte as First Vice Moderator of the GSC.

Corporate Resolution

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-29 VOTED: To approve the Corporate Resolution as follows:

RESOLVED, that any two of the following officers and employees of the Corporation, to wit:

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Secretary
Kenneth Bradsell, Assistant Secretary
Barbara Boers, Treasurer

be and they are hereby authorized and empowered to execute and deliver any contract or other agreement, including but not limited to contracts or other agreements for the sale, assignment, transfer or disposition of any stocks, bonds, or other securities or real estate now or hereafter owned or held by the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America; and further,

resolved, that any individual to whom a copy of these resolutions shall be delivered may rely upon these resolutions until such time as written notice of any change, amendment or cancellation thereof shall have been received by such individual.

**Recommendation
for 2009
Nominations**

Paul Karssen provided an overview of 2009 anticipated vacancies on commissions and agencies being addressed by the Commission on Nominations. He urged GSC assistance in identifying potential members for GSC.

**New Policy
Regarding
Financial Report**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-30

VOTED: To adopt the following as new GSC Policy EL-5:

The General Secretary will not fail to ensure:

1. That the financial activities of the General Synod Council are recorded and reported accurately and in a timely and efficient manner;
2. That the finance systems carried out by the GSC's finance department on behalf of the corporations and agencies of the RCA are able to adequately support the effective financial management of the RCA's ministries, mission, governance, and administration as directed by the General Synod, and as stated in the "Ends" established by the GSC, and in the goals and objectives of the other corporations and agencies supported by the GSC's finance department;
3. That the General Secretary and staff are able to adequately address concerns identified in audit reports and related management letters and avoid undue risk from inadequate finance and/or information technology infrastructure.

Report on Policy Changes	Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC
GSC 08-31	VOTED: To number the new financial activities and functions in the GSC Policy manual “EL-5” and to renumber the current EL-5 and follow executive limitations policies sequentially.
New Disabilities Ends Policy	Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC
GSC 08-32	VOTED: To adopt the following revisions to E-4: <u>The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations filled with disciples, nurtured inwardly, focused outwardly, becoming like Jesus in all they think, say and do in order to show the love of God in all circumstances to all people. RCA congregations will be equipped to welcome and fully include all persons with disabilities and their families, so that persons with disabilities can become professing and active followers of Jesus and serve God to the best of their abilities.</u>
Agenda Planning	Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC
GSC 08-33	VOTED: To adopt the following amended policy wording to GP 4.5: GSC members wishing consideration of a new policy or a policy amendment will supply a proposed policy in writing to the moderator prior to the meeting. <u>Included in this proposal will be:</u> <u>a. Category of Governance</u> <u>b. Author</u> <u>c. Reason for new policy or amendment</u> <u>d. Proposed policy content.</u>
GSC Self-Monitoring, Review, and Evaluation	The GSC instructed the moderator to place on the GSC’s Spring 2009 agenda meeting time for reflection and self evaluation.
Investment Advisory Committee Report	John Ornee invited Barbara Boers to comment on the printed report of the Investment Advisory Committee and invited the GSC members to ask questions.
Audit Committee Report	John Ornee invited Ron Vande Bunte to comment on the printed report of the Audit Subcommittee and invited the GSC members to ask questions.
General Synod Referrals	Wesley Granberg-Michaelson provided for the GSC members a review of the Assignment and Status Report on General Synod Adopted Recommendations.

Task Force to Study Ways to Increase Participation in the General Synod by people of Racial/Ethnic Backgrounds and Women (MGS 2008 R-11)

Earl James, Mary Clark and Kristy DePress have been assigned as staff to this task force. Anna Gonzales and Lizbeth Moss volunteered to join this group as representatives of GSC. The three staff members will recruit additional members for approval by the moderator.

Report from the Editorial Council of the Church Herald (MGS 2008 R-31, R-32 and R-33)

John Ornee invited Mary Wisner from the *Church Herald* Editorial Council and Terry DeYoung, *Church Herald* staff, to present the proposal from the Editorial Council. Mary Wisner spoke to the GSC summarizing the draft proposal (Attachment A).

John Ornee invited the GSC to ask questions of Mary and/or Terry. He informed the GSC that two to three GSC members are needed to work with Wes and a few members of the Editorial Council to respond to the recommendations from the General Synod. John Ornee, Ned Beadel and Ron Vande Bunte are the GSC members who will work with Wes.

Hope Prayer Team (MGS 2008 R-35)

John Ornee reported on his meetings with the prayer team. Richard Welscott, Director of Development and Kristy DePree, Coordinator for Discipleship, were also in attendance. John Ornee asked for two GSC members to meet with the Hope Prayer Team regarding issues around position, funding, and other issues that may develop. Aaron Klein and Elizabeth Kersten volunteered to meet with the prayer team.

Review of RCA Funding (MGS 2008 R-37)

The GSC viewed a video and power point presentation regarding Stewardship. The presentation was led by Barbara Boers, John Ornee and Richard Welscott. The GSC broke up into small groups to discuss funding and stewardship. One representative from each group reported its discussion (Attachment B).

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 08-34

VOTED: To instruct the General Secretary to have staff further the process of finding ways to explore alternative strategies for funding the church's work (for example, through communication; new church organization issues, alternative calculations, etc.).

Update Response to Spring 2008 MFCA Letter Regarding Assessments (MGS 2008 R-37)

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson reviewed the MFCA letter and explained that MFCA would like the format used in dividing Theological assessments to be reconsidered. The GSC decided that changing the format at this time is not possible. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson will communicate this to the MFCA and report to the GSC at its Fall 2009 meeting.

The GSC asked Wesley Granberg-Michaelson to discuss funding at the next meeting of the "Emerging Church Leader's" gathering in the Spring 2009.

**Decade Freed
From Racism:
Sixth Element
Of “Our Call”
(MGS 2008 R-67)**

Moderator, John Ornee and Ken Bradsell led the GSC in a “world café” discussion process to help the GSC develop its response to General Synod 2008 R-67. The GSC discussed all of its current “Ends” statements and discussed how best to incorporate new language in its “Ends” and in the “Our Call” documents to better reflect the church’s commitment to become a multiracial and multiethnic denomination freed from the sin of racism. As part of the process the GSC reviewed and discussed the suggestions that had been generated from the discussions with the General Synod’s commissions.

Following the afternoon discussions, the moderator, John Ornee, appointed a writing team, which included Lizbeth Moss, Aaron Klein, Christopher Poest, James Seawood and Marianne Lin to work on a draft of how the core values of the Belhar (Unity, Reconciliation and Justice) will be integrated into “Our Call” and the Global Ends Policy.

The moderator reminded the GSC that the work at this meeting regarding “Our Call” and the “Ends” statements in response to GS 2008 R-67 will be shared with a team inclusive of commission moderators and GSC members prior to the GSC’s spring 2009 meeting, will be circulated to commissions for review and comment, and will be finalized at the GSC Spring 2009 meeting for report to General Synod in June 2009.

**Process for
Hiring Denominational to Reflect
a Racial/Ethnic
and Gender
Representation
(MGS 2008 R-70)**

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson informed the GSC that there are normally benchmarks in place during a hiring process including matters of race, ethnicity, the recruitment of young leaders, etc. This is a practice that should be considered essential in developing revised practices for hiring denominational staff that reflects the racial/ethnic and gender make up of the RCA. He also advised the council that a task force will be formed to review this process and give recommendations on how the current hiring practices can be improved. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson has appointed Sharon Hayes, personnel director, as staff person to this Task Force. The GSC asked Wesley Granberg-Michaelson to inform the Commission for Women and the Commission on Race and Ethnicity about any legal restrictions that can occur when/if applicants are asked their ethnicities during an interview.

**General Synod 2009
Planning Team**

The planning team is currently being formed. This is an ad hoc staff team drawn together to assist the General Synod office with the scope and schedule of the meeting and its agenda. Planners of the GS 2009 meeting will strive to create “connections” for delegates between the adoption of the Belhar Confession and “Our Call.” The Saturday evening program will include a keynote speaker. Barbara Skinner has been invited to address the synod. The General Secretary is awaiting confirmation from her at this time. President, Carol Bechtel is responsible for appointing the worship planning team, worship leaders, and the overall design of special and daily worship services.

**General Synod
2010 Planning**

At the request of the officers of the General Synod and the General Secretary the director of operations is reviewing options for hosting the 2010 General Synod meeting in the San Francisco Bay area in cooperation with the Center City Network Classis, Classis of Central California, and the Regional Synod of the Far West. The GSC requested that no decision be made until a full assessment of comparative costs can be completed and reviewed by the GSC, perhaps via a conference call meeting in early 2009.

Linking with the Church – GSC Member Attendance At Classis Meetings

The GSC discussed the importance of each member to not only attend the classis meeting that he or she is a member of but also to attending other classis meetings so that it is understood that the GSC is interested in reaching out to the wider church and wants to listen to concerns and be able to answer questions.

The GSC asked the general secretary: (a) to create a grid of classis meetings and assign a GSC member to an additional classis other than his or her home classis; (b) to send a letter to each clerk informing him or her that a GSC member would like to attend an upcoming meeting and will be available to answer questions and seek advice. The General Secretary was also asked to provide a guide sheet that will assist GSC members in understanding his or role at these meetings.

GSC Education on Ends Determination

The moderator asked the GSC if any information is needed to assist them in serving as council members more effectively. The GSC responded with the following:

Review Ends policies because they appear to be too broad and need to be more specific. (This will be place on the agenda for the Spring 2009 GSC meeting.)

- The Ends policies need to be clarified so that the GSC is going in a direction that they want to go.
- Continuous training for the GSC in Policy Governance .
- Schedule future oral reports to the GSC from the Racial Ethnic representatives.
- Information that defines expectations of GSC members and a refresher course, and materials that will prepare members on how to carry out the RCA's vision.
- Strength Finders for GSC members.
- Work on being more credible as a body.

GSC also discussed two additional items: (1) Letter from Board of Benefits Services (BOBS) and (2) Letter from Commission on Christian Action.

Letter from BOBS

BOBS is moving in the direction of incorporating Policy Governance into the way it governs. The board has a concern about who the Director is accountable to. Currently, the Director is not responsible to the board but to Kenneth Bradsell, GSC executive staff. This RCA unified staffing arrangement is not addressed in policy governance as designed by John Carver and will require an RCA designed solution. The GSC agreed that Ronald Vande Bunte and Michelle Chahine will meet with two members of BOBS and discuss possible solutions to this and other concerns.

Letter from the Commission on Christian Action

The letter is asking the GSC to investigate the cancellation of funds and transferring issues regarding a Native American church in Macy, Nebraska. Funding for this church was provided by Mission Services. Full financial responsibility for the congregation is being transferred from Global Mission to the consistory and the Classis of Central Plains. Funding for the pastor and church through the GSC's Global Mission program

will cease on October 31, 2008. The GSC asked the General Secretary to investigate these concerns and report to the council at its Spring 2009 meeting.

**Appointment of
Members to the
Investment Advisory
Committee and to the
Audit Subcommittee**

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-35 VOTED: To appoint Randy Bohl to the Investment Advisory Committee.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC

GSC 08-36 VOTED: To appoint Evan Vermeer to the Audit Subcommittee.

Executive Limitations Monitoring

**Executive Limitations
Monitoring Reports** The following Executive Limitations Monitoring Reports from the General Secretary were reviewed by the GSC:

- EL-1 Global Executive Constraint
- EL-2 Treatment of Staff
- EL-3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
- EL-7 Compensation and Benefits

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 08-37 VOTED: To approve the General Secretary's interpretation and actions as recorded in the reports.

The GSC reviewed EL-4 Financial Condition and Activities (Assessment Relief). The GSC discussed the General Secretary's interpretation of the policy and agreed to the following requests from the Classis of Ontario and the Classis of Pleasant Prairie.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 08-38 VOTED: To grant assessment relief as requested to the Classis of Ontario in the amount of \$5,387.85 for calendar year 2009; and further,

to grant assessment relief as requested to the Classis of Pleasant Prairie in the amount of \$5,206.00.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

VOTED: To table the request for assessment relief by the Classis of Mid-Hudson pending receipt of communication from the Regional Synod of New York regarding its action in response to the classis' request.

The GSC reviewed EL-6 Asset Protection. In addition to the report, the General Secretary reported that he has authorized an increase in the line of credit to the Classis of Central California to \$900,000 to assist with legal fees.

Management Delegation

Executive Session The GSC went into Executive Session to discuss Monitoring General Secretary Performance (MD-5.5 and MD-5.6). The GSC concluded its executive session.

(Note: Full minutes of the executive session are on file in the General Synod office.)

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 08-39 VOTED: To insert the following schedule to Management Delegation Policy 5.5:

Fall: EL 1-4, 7 and 8
Spring: EL 5, 6 and 9-11.

A written Ends Monitoring report by the General Secretary is provided to the GSC annually at the spring meeting to coincide with the approval of the report from the GSC to the annual meeting of the General Synod. Updates and/or interim reporting is provided upon request.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the GSC:

GSC 08-40 VOTED: To amend Management Delegation Policy 5.6 as follows (strikethroughs are deletions, underlines are additions):

General Secretary remuneration will be decided by an ad hoc ~~Performance Relationship~~ Review Committee appointed annually by the moderator not later than the fall meeting of the GSC. ~~immediately preceding the General Synod meeting.~~ The committee will provide personal care, counsel and support for the General Secretary. The committee will provide oversight of the General Secretary on behalf of the GSC between sessions. The committee will conduct ~~its~~ an annual performance review based on expected General Secretary job outputs including: organizational accomplishments of GSC policies on Ends; organizational operation within boundaries established in GSC policies on Executive Limitations; a review of GSC monitoring reports received in the last year; and the quality and effectiveness of the General Secretary's leadership in the General Synod and throughout the wider church. Every third year the committee will conduct a review that includes input from leaders across the Reformed Church, senior executive RCA staff (GSC and regional), and ecumenical colleagues. The committee will bring its annual and third year reports to the GSC meeting immediately preceding the General Synod meeting. Any proposed adjustment in remuneration will be reported to and must be confirmed by the GSC at the meeting immediately preceding the General Synod meeting. ~~its fall meeting.~~ Unless specific action is taken to the contrary, an adjustment in compensation/benefits will occur at the start of the GSC's fiscal year.

Upon recommendation of its moderator, the following persons were appointed to the Relationship Review Committee:

Mary Bechler
Thomas DeVries, Chair
Stephanie Doeschot
Christopher Poest

Incidental Information

One Thing 2010 Event

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson reported that the received and recorded evaluations from One Thing 2008 were positive and affirming. Plans for a January 2010 One Thing event are in progress. Ken Eriks is leading a staff team that is looking into sites in Denver, Colorado and Nashville, Tennessee.

Kansfield Care Team Update

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson reported that Barbara Fillette, a member of the care team, has been faithful in keeping contact with Norman and Mary Kansfield. There has been a disconnection in communication because Norman and Mary appear to be unaware that Barbara's contact with them is on behalf of the care team. They understand it to be a personal contact. Wes will contact Barbara to inform her of the situation and ask her to be certain that the Kansfields know she is contacting them on behalf of the care team.

Report of the GS President

Carol Bechtel gave an overview of her historical Sankofa trip to Birmingham, Selma and Memphis. The trip is sponsored by the Evangelical Covenant Church. The trip encompasses looking back in order to move forward. Carol Bechtel also discussed her visit with the Rocky Mountain, Dakota and Brooklyn Classes. She is planning international trips to Northern Ireland, South Africa and Kenya.

Report of the Vice President

James Seawood informed the GSC that Brighton Heights Reformed Church will celebrate 185 years of ministry. He gave a report about his trip to Southern Africa with Greg Alderman, pastor at Christ Community Church in Carmichael, California. They represented the RCA as visiting delegates at the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. James Seawood also discussed his desire to work towards a plan that will allow Southern African Seminary International students, who desire, to study in the United States.

Report of the General Secretary

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson discussed the following items:

- Spent time with a group that Vicky Menning, Coordinator of Church Health and Coaching and Rodger Price, Coordinator of Leader Renewal and Networks, are teaching to be coaching trainers
- Discussion with Jay Harsevoort, Coordinator for Volunteers in the Mission Volunteer Program, about his trip to Kenya and how empowering it was for Jay and other pastors that went on this trip
- His reflections about how powerful the results are when the mission and common vision of the church are clear.

- The GSC will receive a report at its Spring meeting from the Church Multiplication Team
- New staff members: Jessica Bratt, Executive Coordinator, En Young Kim, Coordinator for CPAAM, and Jhonny Alicea-Baez, newly appointed Director of Global Mission. Wes addressed efforts to fill the Director of Development position prior to the retirement of Richard Welscott.
- Belhar Implementation Team with increased staff support is working on efforts to encourage full discussion of the confession prior to General Synod 2009 vote regarding adoption. The team is also developing plans to assist classes with discussion/consideration of Belhar in 2010 if the General Synod votes to adopt it next June.
- The PACT staff group will participate in a Sankofa trip in April 2009.
- His continued annual meetings with “Young Emerging Leaders” in RCA ministry.
- Looking at what is a multicultural future and issues of staff development and how we nurture future leaders
- Contacting Reggie McNeal about spending more time with senior staff in December to review how to best measure our work as we strive to accomplish GSC ends.

Report of the Moderator

John Ornee gave an overview of a mission opportunity called “Journey to Mosaic”. He and others visited Skid Row in California, a place where homeless people camp out. They handed out food and prayed with people. He talked about the officers meeting in the Grand Rapids office in August that included Wes Granberg-Michaelson and Kenneth Bradsell to discuss recommendations and the GSC Meeting October 2008.

Correspondence from the Classis of the Greater Palisades

John Ornee asked Wesley Granberg-Michaelson to report on his consultation with the Commission on Church Order (CCO) regarding the request of the Greater Palisades Classis to delay action on the seating of the delegates from the Center City Network Classis at the 2009 meeting of the General Synod and to place a moratorium on the reception and seating of any additional classis delegations to General Synod until such time as the General Synod can fully deliberate and define the bases upon which a classis may be organized and seated. The CCO advised him that it is their opinion that the Regional Synod of the Far West acted in accord with the *Book of Church Order*. The CCO will likely bring a proposal in their report to General Synod 2009 suggesting a seminar on the issue of classis boundaries some time in late 2009 or early 2010.

The CCO also discussed with Wes the Church Multiplication Team (CMT) “Conviction.” The CCO continues to discuss concerns with the “Conviction.” The General Secretary advised the CCO to continue to be in dialogue with CMT to see if the suggestions of CCO to bring the “Conviction” into compliance with the *BCO* are acceptable to CMT.

Concluding Business

Future Meetings

- March 24-26, 2009 (beginning at 1:00 pm and ending at 11:00 am – New York metro area/participate in Belhar Confession event at Marble Collegiate Church in New York City).
- June 4-9, 2009 (General Synod – Hope College, Holland, Michigan).
- October 16, 18, 2009 (Joint Meeting with Commissions, Location TBD)

Adjournment

The fall meeting of the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America adjourned with prayer at 11:18 a.m. on Sunday, October 17, 2008.

Mornier Rich, Recorder
Kenneth Bradsell, Assistant Secretary